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Burying Communism

The Central Intelligence Agency is all set to bury the Soviet Union as a serious competitor in the various international races that are run as part of the Cold War Olympics. Russia's gold reserves have dwindled and its rate of economic growth is said to have suddenly become stunted, no doubt from over-indulgence in ideological vodka. This could put the Russians permanently out of the armaments race and the space race, as well as disqualifying them as *bona fide* contestants for the political favors of underdeveloped countries that hope to get foreign aid. Indeed, as CIA spokesmen see it, the Soviet Union itself is now in need of foreign aid, in the form of long-term export credits extended by the industrialized West. Some very powerful men in Washington plainly hope that these will be denied the Russians, who are to be fed just sufficient surplus American wheat to keep them fit enough to ward off the Chinese, but otherwise are to be taught by stern privations how presumptuous it was of them to challenge their betters to an economic duel. As Marx stood Hegel on his head, so the CIA is triumphantly reversing the jubilant statement that was made by Mao Tse-tung in 1957, after the launching of the first Sputnik, that "the East wind is prevailing over the West wind." It seems that Mao Tse-tung and Khrushchev both blew until they cracked their cheeks, but now have no wind left to speak of.

Prudent economists have cast some cautious doubts on the accuracy of the CIA's figures illustrating the slowdown of Soviet economic growth. But the Russians' own anguished cries of denial, and also some very revealing previous Soviet admissions of economic setbacks, suggest that the CIA's diagnosis may well be near to the truth. If so, it does not follow that the CIA's opinion as to what should be done about it is correct. In fact, to accept it would be to repeat old follies. President Johnson's dictum is more up to date: the US will not be buried, but also is not out to bury anyone else. Mr. Khrushchev himself never tires of the tale of how the encircling capitalists made such earnest attempts to strangle the Bolshevik Revolution that they taught the Bolsheviks how to endure and to be tough. The "hostile imperialists" also rallied the Russian people to their strange new rulers as hardly anything else could have done, and this is the story of nearly every other country - including the young American Republic - to which this sort of foreign stranglehold has been applied. To hope to topple or tame Castro by some kind of economic *cordon sanitaire* is probably silly. Solemnly to propose the same treatment for the Soviet

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